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THE POETRY SOCIETY OF WINNIPEG

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DOMINION-WIDE COMPETITION

P O E M S

Awarded Prizes

and

Honourable Mention

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PRODIGAL.

This is the long awaited coronation
That set in our ears the jaying gossips humming,
Now the note is closed on a final bar of song:
'Spring is coming, coming.'

Exultant church chimes heave their weight of wings,
Belch forth a protest from their belly's hollow;
Set free from conventry upon the singing, clamouring air
Pidgeon, dove and swallow.

Old men take up the cry, leave hibernating,
Old women sullenly unwind, undo
The corsetted arteries, the laced-up veins of cold
Letting the rich blood through.

And the young girl in her adolescent cocoon,
Breasts quickened, thighs heavy with fevered anticipation,
Starts like a young deer in the questioning thicket poised
For the initiation.

Here in the park above the turret tops
Cubed, diamond-set around Memorial Square,
The Unknown Soldier on his mud-stained pedestal
Indifferent, unaware
Of his dirty face, his streaming hair and eyes,
Stands rapt with wonder as he sees her pass,
One with a jingle of earrings, a shimmer of flesh, a scent
Of fragrant rain-wet grass.

And O, how sweet the sound of her bracelets' laughter,
The brittle fragments of laughter that cut with an edge,
Splintered piece of sky, the prisoning bars of bough,
Now-thicket, tower and hedge.

And O, what joy to heart the sight of her,
Air-streaming sunlight; skirt above bare knees
Hopped, basket-like, as she goes dancing down the lanes
Sprinkling leaves on trees.

Myra Lazeczko Haas.

First Prize

2085452

S N O W

What monstrous wreckage from
Earth's endless agonies,
Since Time began, has snow
Shrouded in peace!

First, things related to chaos and seeking
Substance and form - giant upthrust of mountain,
Gasping volcanoes and broken-toothed glaciers,
Scarred and contorted strata of rocks.

All this it witnessed through
Time almost infinite,
And without comment
Shrouded in peace.

Then from the vallies arise the sun-drinking,
Lush speckled plants; grow gaudier, fiercer;
Fight for the light with hooked claw, hairy tendril,
Clutching and stabbing, choking or choked.

All this it witnessed through
Vast span of ages,
And without comment
Shrouded in peace.

Massively armoured monsters emerge, and
Wander like loosened pieces of landscape,
Come on each other and launch blindly into
Battles that leave their hulks deadlocked in death.

All this it witnessed through
Dawning pre-history,
And without comment,
Shrouded in peace

Now very quickly come changes and marvels-
Man is seen lighting fires, felling trees, building;
Matching the beauty of mountain and snow-flake
With purest wonders of passion and skill.

All this it witnesses -
Adds its own beauty -
Momentous union
Of nature and man!

But the scene darkens: fire, smoke and sulphur
Scorch the quiet countryside, leaving a wrack of
Bronze helmet - coat-of-mail - red tunic - battle-dress -
Blood-spattered stone-work and stiff, mangled limbs.

All this it witnessed through
Some thousand winters,
And without comment
Shrouded in peace.

And when this happens once more; when man stretches
Furtive and fear-palsied hands for the weapon
That will bring victory riding on doom:
When the flash binds and the wave overwhelms all -
When the last shriek ushers in the long silence -
When the brief incident, Man, is concluded,
Nothing remaining of all he created
But the mute wreckage amid the split rocks

This with a final sigh
It will shroud tenderly
Whisp'ring a ghostly: Why?
Through all Eternity.

Second prize.

Geoffrey Vivien

Now very quickly come changes and marvels -
Men in seen lighting trees, falling trees, buildings
Watching the beauty of mountain and snow-plate
With patient wonders of passion and skill.
All this it witnesses -
All its own beauty -
Momentary action
Of nature and man!

But the scene darkens: fire, smoke and anguish
Gleam the quiet countryside, leaving a wreck of
Bronze helmet - coat-of-mail - red tunic - battle-axe -
Blood-splattered armor-work and still, tangled limbs.
All this it witnesses through
Some obscure window,
And without comment
Chronicles in verse.

And when this happens once more; when men are
Turbid and fear-pained hands for the weapon
That will bring victory riding on doom;
Then the flash binds and the wave overwhelms all -
Then the fast strike shatters in the long silence -
Then the brief incident, Man, is concluded,
Nothing remaining of all he created
But the mass wreckage and the split rocks
This with a final sigh
It will arrest tenderly
Writing a ghostly Why
Through all Eternity.

Geoffrey Vivian

second prize.

THE VOYAGE.

Those on the shore have waved their love to us. Darker
and darker, now
Farther and farther away from the named and familiar day.
This is a still forever to last for a while until we
approach

The eventual harbour. Neither the day discarded
Nor the inchoate dawn can enter our cabin privacy;
Locked behind strangeness we are safe from ourselves
And humanly look for our others.

Within a sea-borne shell we live
Long enough to love where the past cannot reprove.
Curled in the sun, bodies forget their failures, so
Objective like a toe, our affections smile at us
And do not let us weep, for in this one-tense interval
To-day reacts to-morrow.

(The past will not leave us.
Like death it is ours and waiting. This is not now.
A parturient loss will find us our futures at every
now, but this is not now, here between .)

We play at allegory and startle our own meaning with
An unimportant truth, hide and seek the hidden
Where childhood buried child. Pilgrims
To an old unconquered world.

(The past will not leave us alone.)

Some will return to a pattern of worry, some will turn
to reform
As soon as we land; some will continue to be and behave
as they are.

All are resolved.
But none may recall the short eternity when,
Day dead astern, night re-entered our lives.

Third Prize.

Strom Robertson

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O U T

You say it is a folly of the mind
To think a house may hearken and give answer?
I tell you I have stood at people's doors
Not once or twice, but times enough to know
It happens and is not wind-sighing either.
One knows the pattern of familiar sounds
Set off like signals by a rap or ring--
Chair scuffed from table, the dull thump of feet
Let rudely down from elevated ease,
Dog-barking, hurrying footsteps, a child's cry--
The quick response of life being lived within
And startled into wondering who you are;
But when a knock brings nothing from behind
A sounding panel, and one knocks again
And summons only silence from beyond
To press about and gather in the ears,
Then it is time for one to listen closer.
I tell you I have knocked at people's doors
And found no answer, and tried knocking louder,
And in a holdbreath silence following
Have heard as plain as if someone close by
Had whispered, "No use, there is no one here;"
And after that I have not knocked again.
Something there is about a house at rest
And emptied for a little of its care
That moves me to go softly on my way
And not disturb what wishes to be left
As unmolested outside as within;
Something there is to formulate a fear
Of too long lingering, of how much harm
Further insistence would be like to do.
Whether inanimation has a power
Of good or ill is not a thing to say;
What I say is that I have heard a house
Whisper to me that I had best begone,
And afterwards I have not knocked again.

John V. Hicks.

Honorable Mention.

T A B L E A U.

The lake lay still beside the canoe,
And rivulets ran from the motionless paddle.
The low grey day leaned over the trees,
And the soundless wind slept in an evergreen cradle.
The elk-fawn touched water with quivering lips,
The dull shadows hung like a mist on the shore,
The doe, legs spread, head down, drank deep,
While silence watched through a half-open door.

Wilf Ready

Honorable Mention.

P L A N

one after one, down the steep flume of time,
The lopp'd and fallen years pass to their goal;
With them fast flows the current of our prime,-
Beauty and strength of body, mind and soul,-
Inexorably gliding toward the gloom.
So swift the passage, and without return!
To what dark destination leads the flume?
Flotsam and waste? And all we strive to learn
Lost with the lapsing years?... But then, if so,
Why stands the flume? And whither move the years
In order'd sequence?...

In a storm of woe,
The world is houseless, buffeted by fears;
The builder rears a shelter from the blast,
Of timber from his stock-pile of the past.

Frances Durden

Honorable Mention.

II. A

...down the steep flume of time,
...and fallen years pass to their goal;
...the last flow the current of our prime--
...and strength of body, mind and soul--
...gliding toward the gloom,
...the passage, and without return,
...that dark destination leads the flame?
...And all we strive to learn
...with the passing years? ... But that, it is,
...stands the flame? And whether move the years
...order's sequence? ...
...In a storm of war,
...world as homeless, buffeted by fear,
...shelter from the blast,
...shelter from his stock-pile of the past,
...Frances Gordon
...trible mention.

M U D F L A T S.

The ebb of the tide, and the flats lie naked,
Only a warm river flows between them
As they gleam in the late September sun.
(Let this be my solace for painting.)
On the deep brown sand boats lie angled and odd,
Wearily leaning above the mark of high water
Rough pole slipways green with the slime of the tides,
The shining seaweeds patched and lined and broken
On the gleam of the mud
Which slopes down to the thin blue river;
A moored boat or two, sculs bundled in rolls,
Brown painted dinghies moved with the rock of the wave,
Then the broad flats again, opaque mirroring as a
Pool of ink mirrors but brightens,
The white spotted clouds, blue sky and the solitary
seagull.
As he steps, beak down, his stiff legs duplicate,
patterned
In the glimmering mud that feels for the sky and the
green sea depths,
How it shines! gleams blue-black, shines silver,
grey, green,
Always that sea-green n basic subtlest colour,
The grass banks of our shore are cut with tiny inlets
Pools and rivers of mud.
Along the stilted straggle-lined jetty four children
move,
While the lean black hull of the boat beyond
Gets ready to live under the dominant sails.

Honorable mention.

Lois Stockley.

Date Due

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Poetry Society of Winnipe

1947 Dominion-wide competition

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